

Susan Strange Protest Diary Entry, 1960

Background information on diary entry for Saturday, February 20, 1960

The original diary with this page is in the archives at Grymes Memorial School, 13775 Spicers Mill Road, Orange, VA, in the "Susan Strange" folder

The first sentence is about how cold it was in our eight-grade homeroom at Grymes Memorial School. Our class of eight decamped to the teachers' lounge and the headmistress's room for classes that day.

The annual operetta was "Rumpelstiltskin," and we apparently practiced on Friday.

My brother, Edwin, had braces, requiring my mother to drive him to the orthodontist in Richmond every month or two to have them adjusted. I usually went along.

Miller & Rhodes and Thalhimers, the two big Richmond department stores at the time, sold much more than clothing and household goods. One or both had a large coin and stamp department on the main floor, as well as a pet shop where my brother and I enjoyed looking at the tropical birds.

As for watching a "group of colored people," I learned through an article in the *New York Times* of Sunday, February 21, 1960, that the department store was Thalhimers and that the majority of the "colored people" were students at Virginia Union University. The initial Greensboro Four sit-in at the Woolworth's counter in Greensboro, NC, occurred only a few weeks earlier on February 20, 1960.

I don't remember if my family was on the 4th floor or elsewhere in Thalhimers, but I must have been close by to write that the students "were politely told the place was closed" and that "the waitresses came running out so happy" that their work day had been cut short.

As for "several thousand people," surely there were only hundreds, but I was only 13, and I recall a sea of people on the first floor of the department store.

"All the neighboring stores" weren't closed, but Woolworths and G.C. Murphy were closed according to the article in the *New York Times*.

I thought the "funny white boys" were just silly kids showing off. Little did I know that these "funny white boys" would grow into angry, old, white supremacists.

"Colored carried American [flags]" is, in my opinion, the highlight of the diary entry. This fact was not mentioned in the *New York Times* article.

Susan B. Strange

November 19, 2019

Citation: Susan B. Strange diary entry, 20 February 1960. Accession 52910. Personal papers collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.